

# Potomac River Tidal Fresh Important Bird Area Fact Sheet

**Location:** Fairfax, Stafford, King George, and Prince William Counties

**Total Size :** 113,775 ha (281,024 acres)

**Elevation:** 0-86 m (0-282 feet)

**Site Description:** The tidal fresh/oligohaline reach of the Potomac River included in the IBA extends from Mathias Point to just above Fort Belvoir. The river is wide along this stretch with several large tributaries. Tributaries contain considerable emergent and forested wetlands. Surrounding uplands support extensive tracts of hardwoods that are increasingly giving way to residential development. The area lies within the extreme inner coastal plain and has a great deal of topographic relief that has led to the development of a diversity of upland habitats. Due to its close proximity to the nation's capital, the area includes many historic properties and landmarks.

**Protection:** Due to its size, history, and proximity to Washington D.C., the tidal fresh reach of the Potomac contains many tracts of land dedicated to conservation, education, military training, and recreation. Both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Defense hold lands that are strategically important for conservation. The state of Virginia also maintains several tracts of land that are state parks or natural area preserves. The regional park authority and individual counties own other lands for recreational access.

**Birds:** Due to its proximity to Washington D.C., the upper tidal reach of the Potomac River has been the focus of intensive ornithological observation for 200 years by prominent ornithologists stationed in the area. The landscape and bird community have changed dramatically over this time period. One of only 2 known breeding locations for the Bachman's Warbler in Virginia was located within the area. Currently, the area supports a significant community of piscivorous bird species. This includes one of the largest Great Blue Heron colonies within the mid-Atlantic region, a dense breeding population of Bald Eagles, and both a summer and winter concentration area for migrant Bald Eagles. The rich hardwood forests are strategically important for local breeding populations of neotropical migrants, as well as, stopover areas for northern populations moving through the region in the fall. The waterways support significant populations of waterfowl during migration and winter.

**Bald Eagle Nestling**



**Conservation and Threats:** The dominant threat to the avifauna within this area is the loss of habitat to urban expansion extending down the river from Washington D.C.. Jurisdictions within the area are experiencing some of the fastest human growth rates in the nation. This growth is causing the rapid loss of habitat for many species. All of the

upland habitats are in immediate danger from development. The increase in the human population has led to an increase in the demand for access to the waterway for recreational boating. Increase in boating activity and associated disturbance is the greatest threat to the Bald Eagle concentration area. In recent years, increases in disturbance along important shorelines appear to be limiting Bald Eagle use of the area during peak time of the year. In the future, rapid development of private lands will elevate the importance of government and conservation lands for the management of sensitive species. Maintaining continuity in the mission of these lands as it pertains to population protection will be important.

# Important Bird Areas of Virginia

## IBA Nomination Form

**The Important Bird Area (IBA) program is an international effort to identify, conserve, and monitor a network of sites that provide essential habitat for bird populations. BirdLife International began the IBA program in Europe in 1985. Since that time, BirdLife partners in more than 100 countries have joined together to build the global IBA network. Audubon, the BirdLife Partner in the U.S. has been working since 1995 to identify and conserve hundreds of IBAs all across the United States.**

For more information, visit: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html>

Or contact Aimee Weldon, the Virginia IBA Coordinator

P.O. Box 1089, Ashland, VA 23005    [aweldon@audubon.org](mailto:aweldon@audubon.org)    804-370-3528

Additional copies of the Nomination Form may be downloaded from [www.virginia-iba.org](http://www.virginia-iba.org)

Thank you for your interest in the Important Bird Areas Program. Please tell us about the areas that you think may meet the criteria by completing as much of this form as possible. Detailed instructions for fields requiring clarification may be found in the **INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF IBA NOMINATION FORM**. It is important that the data and information about the sites are recorded in a standard format, so that they may be accurately evaluated.

I. Nominator Information	
YOUR NAME: <b>Bryan D. Watts</b>	PHONE: <b>(757) 221-2247</b>
AFFILIATION(if any) <b>Center for Conservation Biology College of William and Mary</b>	EMAIL: <b>bdwatt@wm.edu</b>
ADDRESS: <b>PO Box 8795</b>	
ZIP CITY, STATE, <b>Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795</b>	DATE: <b>12/3/06</b>

II. Site Details	
SITE NAME: <b>Potomac River Tidal Fresh</b>	
CITY,TOWN,COUNTY: <b>Fairfax, Stafford, King George, and Prince William Counties</b>	AREA: <b>113775</b> (circle one) acres, sq. miles., <b>hectares</b>
ELEVATION: Minimum <b>0</b> (circle one) feet, <b>meters</b>	ELEVATION: Maximum <b>86</b> feet, <b>meters</b>
COORDINATES (at site center) Latitude <b>38° 28' 50"</b>	Longitude: <b>-77° 19' 58"</b>

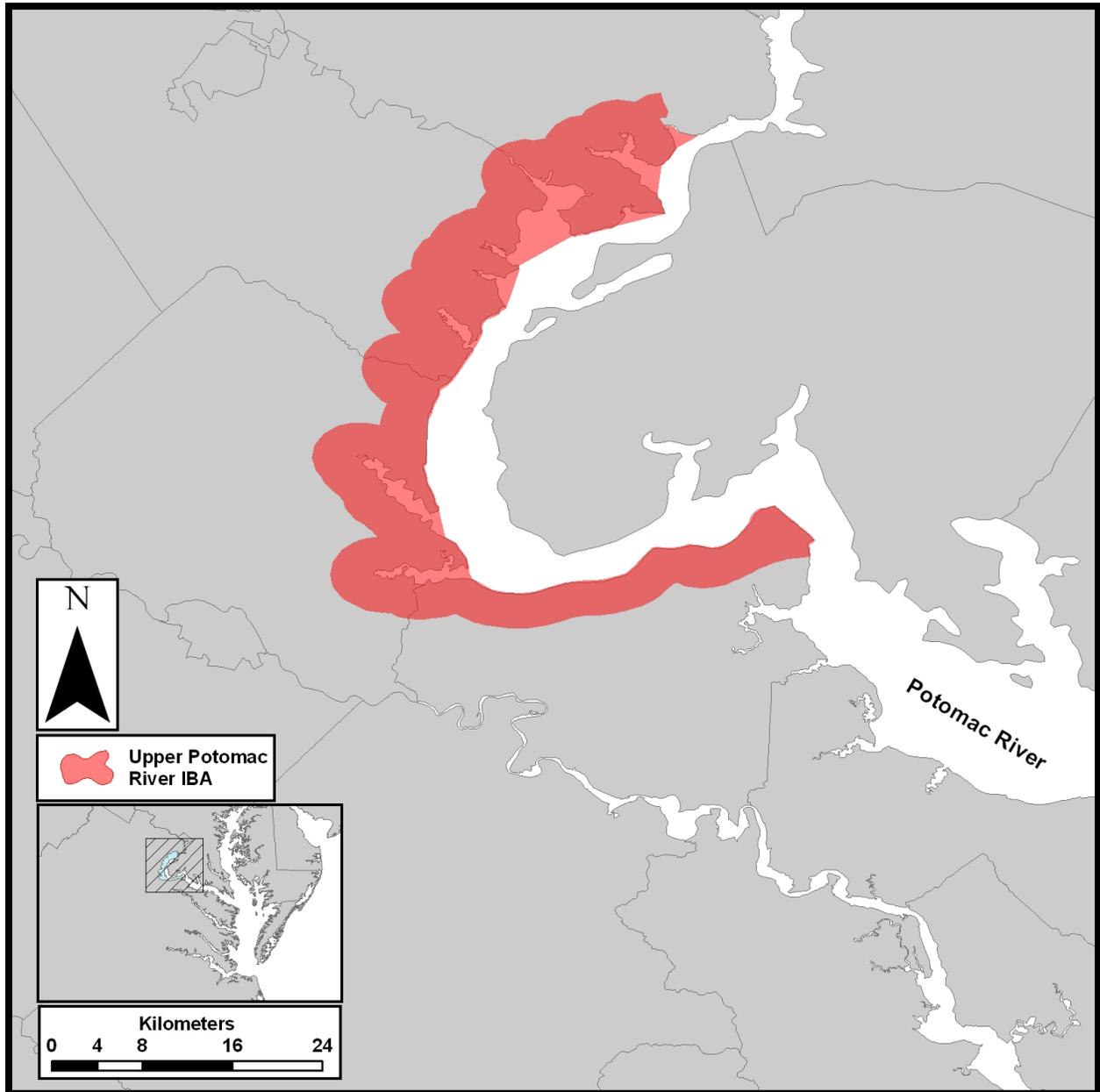
**Ownership:** (Circle One) **federal, state, private**, international waters, communal, religious group, mixed, other

**Ownership Details:** (List owners. If "other" ownership, please describe. If the property is privately owned, please provide contact information and specify if owner is aware of nomination)

**United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
United States Department of Defense**

**Virginia Regional Park Authority**  
**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**  
**Fairfax County**  
**Prince William County**  
**King George County**  
**Many private holdings**

**Road Directions to site** (or location /distance to nearest town) Please include a map if convenient.



### III A. Species List and Population Data

List the species of significance. Provide all other information at your disposal (note: Types of Birds Counted is required). Each record should represent a count at the site in a given year. **Please use the following codes when completing this chart.**

- 1. Relative Abundance:** Abundant = A, Common = C, Frequent = F, Uncommon = U, Rare = R, Not available = NA
- 2. Count:** For all species, enter either **Density** (# per unit of area), please specify ha, acres, sq. mi. or **Max #**. **Max #** is the highest # observed on one visit in a given season. Total season counts may be entered for migrating raptors only.
- 3. Types of Birds Counted:** Individuals = I, Breeding Pairs = B, Adults only = A, Males only = M, Females only = F, Nests = N
- 4. Reliability/Data quality:** Good = G, Medium = M, Poor = P, Unknown = Un
- 5. Source:** Enter the number of the source in this box, and list corresponding details of the sources in Source Details (IIIB) section. Sources may include published reports, surveys, personal observations or field notes.

( ) values represent population thresholds per the Virginia IBA instructions.

Species Name	Season Month/Day of Observation	Year of Observation	Relative Abundance	Counts		Types of Birds Counted	Reliability /Data Quality	Source
				All Groups Density # / ___ area or Max # / visit	Migrating Raptors Only Total Season Count			
Bald Eagle (breeding)	Spring	2006		42 <sup>a</sup> (30)		B	G	1
Bald Eagle (summer)	Summer	2006		169 <sup>b</sup> (100)		I	G	2
Bald Eagle (winter)	Winter	2006		288 <sup>c</sup> (100)		I	G	3
King Rail	Summer		U <sup>d</sup> (30)					
Least Bittern	Summer		U <sup>e</sup> (20)					
Redhead	Winter	2002		53 <sup>f</sup> (500)		I	Un	4
Northern Harrier	Winter	1999		25 <sup>g</sup> (?)		I	Un	5
Barn Owl	Summer	1997		2 <sup>m</sup> (5)		B	Un	6
American Woodcock	Summer		U <sup>i</sup> (50)					
Red-headed Woodpecker	Winter	2004		37 <sup>j</sup> (60)		I	Un	7
Rusty Blackbird	Winter	1999		287 <sup>k</sup> (200)		I	Un	5
Whip-poor-will	Summer		U <sup>l</sup> (500)					
Northern Bobwhite	Winter	2004		13w <sup>m</sup> (100)		I	Un	7
Wood Thrush	Summer		C <sup>n</sup> (1000)					

Worm-eating Warbler	Summer		C <sup>o</sup> (100)				
Prairie Warbler	Summer		C <sup>p</sup> (500)				
Louisiana Waterthrush	Summer		C <sup>q</sup> (200)				
Kentucky Warbler	Summer		R <sup>r</sup> (200)				
Eastern Meadowlark	Winter	2004		39w <sup>s</sup> (200)	I	Un	7
Grasshopper Sparrow	Summer		C <sup>t</sup> (200)				
Field Sparrow	Summer		C <sup>u</sup> (200)				
<b>Colonial Species</b>							
Great Blue Heron	Spring	2003		2030 <sup>v</sup>	B	G	8
Great Egret	Spring	2003		20 <sup>w</sup>	B	G	8

<sup>a</sup>Area supports one of the densest breeding populations in the state.

<sup>b</sup>Over-summering migrants from Southeast. Numerous communal roosts. Site represents one of the most important summer concentrations in Eastern North America.

<sup>c</sup>Over-wintering migrants from Northeast. One of the largest winter concentrations in Bay. Several communal roosts are known.

<sup>d</sup>Considerable habitat available within area. Population likely exceeds population threshold. No population assessment available.

<sup>e</sup>Considerable habitat available within area. Population likely exceeds population threshold. No population assessment available.

<sup>f</sup>Wintering population does not likely meet threshold in most years.

<sup>g</sup>Habitat for this species is limited. Wintering population not significant.

<sup>h</sup>Habitat within the area is limited for this species. It is unlikely that the area reaches the population threshold. No systematic survey available.

<sup>i</sup>Ample habitat within area for this species. Population may reach threshold. No population estimate available.

<sup>j</sup>Considerable habitat available within area. Area almost certainly meets threshold. CBC data does not adequately cover the area. No population estimate available.

<sup>k</sup>Considerable habitat within the area for this species. Area likely exceeds threshold during most winters.

<sup>l</sup>Area contains appropriate habitat but does not likely support population that meets threshold. No population estimate available.

<sup>m</sup>Species has declined dramatically and habitat limited within area. Population does not likely meet threshold. No estimate available.

<sup>n</sup>Species is one of the most common forest species in the area. Extensive habitat available. Species almost certainly meets population threshold. No population estimate available.

<sup>o</sup>Species is a common forest species in the area. Extensive habitat available. Species almost certainly meets population threshold. No population estimate available.

<sup>p</sup>Species is common along marsh edges, within shrubby fields, and clearcuts. Considerable habitat available. Species almost certainly meets population threshold. No population estimate available.

<sup>q</sup>Species is a common forest species in the area. Extensive habitat available. Species almost certainly meets population threshold. No population estimate available.

<sup>r</sup>Habitat for this species is limited and area is not likely to meet population threshold. No overall population estimate available.

<sup>s</sup>Habitat for this species is limited within the area but area likely to meet population threshold. No systematic population estimate available.

<sup>t</sup>Habitat for this species is limited within the area but area likely to meet population threshold. No systematic population estimate available.

<sup>u</sup>Species is common along marsh edges, within shrubby fields, and clearcuts. Considerable habitat available. Species almost certainly meets population threshold. No population estimate available.

<sup>v</sup>Area supports approximately 20% of known state population including the largest colony in the state.

<sup>w</sup>Area supports less than 1% of the state population.

**III B. Source Details**

**Detail the sources of data noted in the “Species List and Population Data” (III A) Section. If additional space is needed, you may attach copies of this form to the nomination.**

1. Watts, B. D. and M. A. Byrd. 2006. Virginia Bald Eagle nest and productivity survey: Year 2006 report. Center for Conservation Biology Technical Report Series, CCBTR-06-11. College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA 31 pp.
2. Cooper, J. 2006. Survey of Potomac River Bald Eagle Concentration Area: June 21-22, 2006. Unpublished data.
3. Cooper, J. 2006. Survey of Potomac River Bald Eagle Concentration Area from Rt 301 to Pohick: winter 2006. Unpublished data
4. Kain, T. 2002. Virginia Christmas Bird Counts: 2001-2002 season. Raven 73:17-54.
5. Kain, T. 1999. Virginia Christmas Bird Counts: 1998-1999 season. The Raven 70:53-86.
6. Watts, B. D. and D. M. Whalen. 2005. An evaluation of nest box use by Common Barn Owls in Virginia. The Raven 75:71-77.
7. Kain, T. 2004. Virginia Christmas Bird Counts: 2003-2004 season. The Raven 75:16-60.
8. Watts, B. D. 2004. Status and distribution of colonial waterbirds in coastal Virginia: 2003 breeding season. CCBTR-04-06. Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA 25 pp.

**IV. IBA Criteria**

Proposed State Level Criteria – Mark all that apply  
 See Instruction IV for **Explanations of Criteria**.

Code	State Definition	Mark all criteria that apply
D 1.	Endangered, threatened, or vulnerable species: The site sustains a breeding or non-breeding population of one or more bird species, sub-species, or isolated populations that is/are endangered, threatened or vulnerable to extirpation.	Yes
D 3.	The site contains a significant suite of species associated with a habitat type that is representative, rare, or threatened in Virginia.	Yes
D 4.	The site contains a significant concentration of one or more species during the breeding season, winter, or during migration.	Yes

**V. Habitat Details**

See Instruction V for **List of Habitats** at both levels below.

	Major vegetation community types	Predominant plant species	Cover %
	Pine Plantation	Loblolly pine	1189 ha
	Mixed Forest	Loblolly Pine	194 ha
		Various oaks	
		Red Maple	
<b>1.</b>	Deciduous Forest	Various oaks	24105 ha
		Hickories	
		Red maple	
		American beech	
<b>2.</b>	Row Crops Pasture Idle Grassland	Corn, soy beans, cotton	6245 ha
		Various grass species	

3.	Forested Wetlands	Red maple	1251 ha
4.	Oligohaline, Tidal Fresh Marshes	Paltandra	529 ha
		Wild rice	
		Spartina Cynosuroides	

Site Name: James River Tidal Fresh

### VI. Land Use

See Instruction VI for description of **Land Uses**. Mark each land use at the site, circle its predominance, and (if known) provide an estimate of the percent cover at the site currently devoted to the land use. You may enter brief notes to clarify some land uses. Detailed explanations of land uses should be reported in Text Summary, section IX.

Check Here	Land Use	Predominance			Cover %	Notes
X	Agriculture 1. Row crops, small grains	Major	Minor	Unknown		
	Agriculture 2. Grasslands (pasture, hay)	Major	Minor	Unknown		
X	Fisheries/aquaculture	Major	Minor	Unknown		
X	Forestry	Major	Minor	Unknown		
X	Hunting	Major	Minor	Unknown		
	Military	Major	Minor	Unknown		
X	Nature Conservation / research	Major	Minor	Unknown		
	Not utilized	Major	Minor	Unknown		
	Other	Major	Minor	Unknown		
X	Tourism / recreation	Major	Minor	Unknown		
	Unknown	Major	Minor	Unknown		
X	Urban / industrial / transport	Major	Minor	Unknown		Increasing
	Water management	Major	Minor	Unknown		

### VII. Threats

See Instruction VII for description of **Threat Codes**. Indicate all threats and the relative level of the threat by entering (L) Low, (M) Medium, (H) high, (U) Unknown in front of all that apply. You may enter notes to clarify some threats. However, detailed explanations of threats should be reported in Text Summary, section IX.

Enter L,M,H,U	Threat	Notes
L	Abandonment/land management reduction	
L	Agricultural expansion/intensification	
L	Aquaculture/fisheries	
L	Burning of vegetation	
L	Dam/dyke/barrage construction/operations	
H	Disturbance to birds	Boating activity
L	Draining wetlands	
L	Dredging/canal building (irrigation)	
L	Filling wetlands	
L	Forest grazing (by native or domestic herbivores)	

L	Groundwater extraction	
H	Industrialization/urbanization	Residential development
H	Infrastructure (roads, power lines, cell towers, etc.)	Residential development
L	Intensified forest management (please elaborate)	
L	Isolation/fragmentation	
L	Mineral/oil/peat extraction	Sand mining
M	Natural events	Erosion of tidal fresh marshes
M	Nonnative (exotic) animal/plant introduction	Expansion of exotics
L	Other	
L	Pesticide application (non-agricultural)	
L	Plantation forestry (Afforestation) on previously open land	
M	Recreation/tourism	
L	Unsustainable exploitation of birds	

<b>VIII. Protected Areas</b>
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**Complete only if this site contains or abuts protected area(s)!**

Enter name and descriptions of protected areas contained within or adjacent to this site.

See **Instruction VIII**

<b>1. Name of protected area:</b> Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>927.8</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>2. Name of protected area:</b> Ocoquan National Wildlife Refuge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>265.3</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>3. Name of protected area:</b> Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>133.3</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>4. Name of protected area:</b> Quantico Marina Base – U.S. Department of Defense	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, Is contained by IBA, <b>Overlaps with IBA</b> , Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>3323.3</b>

<b>5. Name of protected area:</b> Fort Belvoir – U.S. Department of Defense	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, Is contained by IBA, <b>Overlaps with IBA</b> , Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>2101.1</b>

<b>6. Name of protected area:</b> Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge – U.S. Department of Defense	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>602.9</b>

<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles
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<b>7. Name of protected area:</b> Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge – U.S. Department of Defense	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, Is contained by IBA, <b>Overlaps with IBA</b> , Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>24.1</b>

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Prince William Forest Park – National Park Service	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, Is contained by IBA, <b>Overlaps with IBA</b> , Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>327.2</b>

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Leesylvania State Park – Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>198.2</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Mason Neck State Park – Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>742.6</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Caledon State Natural Area – Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>1010.8</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Chotank Creek State Natural Area – Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>448.5</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Pohick Bay Regional Park – Virginia Regional Park Authority	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>405.0</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Occoquan Regional Park – Virginia Regional Park Authority	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>51.6</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Locust Shade Park – Prince William County	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>149.8</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

<b>8. Name of protected area:</b> Barnsfield Park – King George County	
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Area:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles <b>43.7</b>
<b>Relationship: Circle one</b> Protected area <b>contains</b> IBA, Is adjacent to IBA, <b>Is contained by IBA</b> , Overlaps with IBA, Unknown	<b>Overlap:</b> circle one: <b>hectares</b> , acres, sq. miles

**IX. Text Summary**

**Use the following space for additional descriptions of site details.**

**General Site Description:** The tidal fresh-oligohaline reach of the Potomac River included in this IBA extends along the south shoreline from Mathias Point to just above Fort Belvoir including associated large creeks and surrounding uplands. This portion of the Potomac supports a significant community of piscivorous species including Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, and Osprey. The Bald Eagle concentration is one of the largest in Eastern North America and is comprised of the resident breeding population, northern migrants from eastern Canada and New England, and southern migrants from Florida and South Carolina. One of the largest heron colonies within the mid-Atlantic region is located on Mason Neck. The Osprey population is growing rapidly. Brackish and tidal-fresh marshes likely support important populations of King Rails, Least Bitterns, and Coastal Swamp Sparrows but have not been fully explored. Forested wetlands support wintering Rusty Blackbirds and a diverse breeding community. Mixed upland forests support large populations of breeding neotropical migrants and appear to be critical as high-quality stopover areas during fall migration.

**General Ornithological Information:** Due to its proximity to Washington D.C., the upper tidal reach of the Potomac has been the focus of intensive ornithological observation for 200 years by prominent

ornithologists stationed in the area. This has resulted in the documentation of community change over more than a century as the area changed from a rural to urban landscape. One of only 2 known breeding locations for the Bachman's Warbler in Virginia was located within the area. Two prominent Christmas Bird Counts are located within the area. In the 1950s Abbott initiated several investigations including the annual Virginia Bald Eagle nest survey and surveys of heron colonies. Winter waterfowl have been surveyed since the late 1950s. Colonial Waterbirds have been surveyed throughout the area since the 1970s. Investigations of Bald Eagles along the Caledon shoreline were initiated in the early 1980s. Several MAPS stations have been operated within the area during different times since the early 1990s. Osprey and bank-nesting birds were surveyed throughout the area in 1995. More recently, the summer and winter Bald Eagle surveys have been intensified to document the temporal and spatial distribution of migrant eagles. Surveys of birds within refuge and other conservation lands have been conducted in recent years. Although many studies have been conducted within this area, population estimates for several species of conservation concern have not been produced.

**Research / conservation projects:** A large number of research and conservation projects have been conducted within this area since the early 1900s. The number of projects focusing on this area has increased since the early 1980s, though many gaps in understanding persist.

**Habitat / Land Use:** The delineated area includes the southern shoreline, associated creeks, and surrounding uplands. Landuse is dominated by forestland with interspersed farmland but is rapidly giving way to urban development extending down the river from Washington D.C.

**Other Flora / Fauna:**

**Protected Areas:** An important portion of the area is owned and protected to meet conservation, management, and military needs. Major holders include the U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the regional park authority, and the individual counties.

**Threats:** The dominant threat to the avifauna within this area is the loss of habitat to urban expansion extending down the river from Washington D.C.. Jurisdictions within the area are experiencing some of the fastest human growth rates in the nation. This growth is causing the rapid loss of habitat for many species. All of the upland habitats are in immediate danger from development. The increase in the human population has led to an increase in the demand for access to the waterway for recreational boating. Increase in boating activity and associated disturbance is the greatest threat to the Bald Eagle concentration area. In recent years, increases in disturbance along important shorelines appear to be limiting Bald Eagle use of the area during peak time of the year. In the future, rapid development of private lands will elevate the importance of government and conservation lands for the management of sensitive species. Maintaining continuity in the mission of these lands as it pertains to population protection will be important.

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